

100# H 509



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: November 27, 1987

In reply refer to: H-87-55

Mr. Edward Vanderhoof
E. Vanderhoof and Sons Bus Company
18 Wilford Street
West Orange, New Jersey 07052

About 7:34 a.m. on October 9, 1986, two charter intercity tour buses, operated by E. Vanderhoof and Sons Bus Company (Vanderhoof), were traveling westbound in the right lane on State Route (SR) 495 in North Bergen, New Jersey, en route to Washington, D.C. As the westbound buses approached the Kennedy Boulevard exit on SR 495, the second bus suddenly veered leftward into the adjacent lane, struck the left rear of a passenger car traveling in that lane, then crossed into the eastbound contraflow lane, and struck a transit bus en route to New York City. One bus passenger aboard the transit bus was fatally injured and 26 other occupants aboard both buses sustained serious to minor injuries. ^{1/}

Although the use of seatbelts was not a causal factor in the accident, the investigation revealed that Vanderhoof had no current policy concerning the use of seatbelts by busdrivers on official duty. The accident bus was not equipped with seatbelts at the driver's seating position. It is important that whenever the bus is moving the driver wear the seatbelt. The ability to maintain control of the bus in an emergency or crash situation is seriously jeopardized if the driver is thrown from the seat. In a 1972 crash in Virginia, ^{2/} a car ran a stop sign and hit a large schoolbus. The bus ran off the road and partially overturned. All the bus occupants were injured. The Safety Board found that "the second collision of the bus into the embankment was caused by loss of driver control; the nonuse of available seatbelts by the driver prevented the regaining of control." Thus, to prevent a loss of control during an accident Vanderhoof should require its drivers to wear their seatbelts whenever the vehicle is in motion.

^{1/} For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--"Multiple Collision with an Intercity Charter Bus, Passenger Car, and Transit Bus, State Route 495, North Bergen, New Jersey, October 9, 1986" (NTSB/HAR-87/06).

^{2/} For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--"Schoolbus-Automobile Collision and Fire Near Reston, Virginia, February 29, 1972" (NTSB/HAR-72/02).

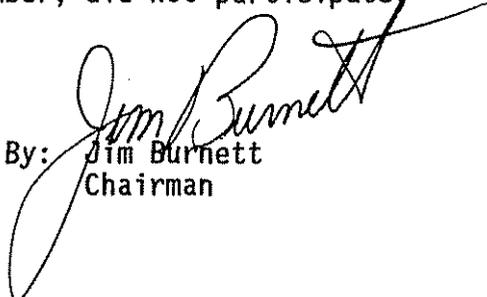
Therefore, as a result of its investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the E. Vanderhoof and Sons Bus Company:

Install seatbelts at the driver's station in all company buses engaged in interstate commerce and require all drivers to wear them while occupying company buses. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-87-55)

Also as a result of its investigation, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-87-56 to the DeCamp Bus Lines and H-87-57 to the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility ". . . to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation H-87-55 in your reply.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and NALL and KOLSTAD, Members, concurred in this recommendation. LAUBER, Member, did not participate.

By: 
Jim Burnett
Chairman